

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LUXEMBOURG 0333

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LU

SUBJ: 1974 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS: PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

REF: LUXEMBOURG 0330

SUMMARY: AS SHOWN BY THE FIGURES REPORTED IN REFTTEL, ON MAY 26 THE LUXEMBOURG ELECTORATE SHOWED A MARKED PREFERENCE FOR THE CENTRIST PARTI DEMOCRATIQUE (PD) AND MODERATE LEFTIST SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY (POSL) OVER THE CENTER-RIGHT CHRISTIAN SOCIAL PARTY (PCS) AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCL). ALTHOUGH THE PCS REMAINS THE LARGEST PARTY IN PARLIAMENT, IT IS LIKELY THAT A POSL/ PD COALITION WILL BE THE FIRST OBJECT OF GOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS. WITH FOREIGN MINISTER THORN (PD) IN A REINFORCED POSITION, NO SIGNIFICANT AFFECT ON US POLICIES OR INTERESTS IS EXPECTED FOLLOWING THE ELECTIONS. CLOSE SUMMARY.

1. DECLINE OF EXTREMES: ALTHOUGH STILL THE LARGEST
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PARTY IN PARLIAMENT, THE PCS, WHICH HAS BEEN GOVERNING

LUXEMBOURG IN COALITION ALMOST WITHOUT INTERRUPTION FOR ALMOST FIFTY YEARS, IS THE MAJOR LOSER IN THE ELECTION. HURT BY ITS RIGHTIST IMAGE, THE COMPLACENCY OF ITS CAMPAIGN, THE DEARTH OF ATTRACTIVE CANDIDATES AND A SENTIMENT FAVORING THE ALTERNATION OF POWER, THE PCS FINDS ITSELF VIRTUALLY ISOLATED. THE PCL ALSO GAVE GROUND ALTHOUGH ITS STRONG BASE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SOUTH REDUCED PARLIAMENTARY LOSSES. WITH AN AGING LEADERSHIP, A STALINIST RIGIDITY IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FACED WITH A DYNAMIC POSL COMPETING FOR THE PROGRESSIVE VOTE, THE PCL, WHICH HAD BEEN SLOWLY BETTERING ITS SCORE FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS, WILL NEED CHANGES IN PERSONNEL AND PROGRAM TO MAKE A COME-BACK. SIMILARLY, THE TROTSKYITE LCR AND THE RIGHTIST LPL BOTH FAILED TO WIN MORE THAN 1 PERCENT OF THE VOTE.

2. CENTER-LEFT PROGRESSES. DESPITE THE SOCIALISTS' SPLIT IN 1971 (WHICH LED TO THE CREATION OF THE PSD), THE POSL GAINED FIVE SEATS WHICH BROUGHT THE PARTY CLOSE TO ITS 1968 TOTAL (18). TAKING VOTES AWAY FROM THE PCL, AND RETAINING MOST OF THE TRADITIONAL SOCIALIST VOTERS, DESPITE A VAGUE PLATFORM AND UNINSPIRING LEADERSHIP, THE POSL DEMONSTRATED THE STRENGTH OF THE SOCIALIST ELECTORATE IN LUXEMBOURG. THE PSD ALMOST HELD ITS OWN, WHICH PROBABLY INDICATES THAT THE REFORMIST SOCIAL-DEMOCRATS DRAINED OFF VOTERS FROM THE PCS. THE ELECTION'S MAJOR WINNER WAS THE PD HEADED BY FOREIGN MINISTER GASTON THORN. THE PD'S POPULAR LEADERS IMPROVED THE PARTY POSITION IN ALL ELECTORAL DISTRICTS AS WELL AS IN THE 18-21 AGE GROUP VOTING FOR THE FIRST TIME, AND SKILLFULLY BASED THEIR CAMPAIGN ON BOTH THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PCS/PD COALITION AND THE NEED TO CHANGE THE PERSONALITY AND TYPE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE COUNTRY.

3. OUTLOOK: IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT A TWO-PARTY COALITION COMPRISING TWO OF THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES (PCS, POSL, PD) WILL BE FORMED. BUT DESPITE THE PCS' NUMERICAL STRENGTH IN PARLIAMENT AND THE FACT THAT THE DEMOCRATS APPEAR TO BE THE ARBITERS OF THE SITUATION SINCE THEY ARE GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE PARTNERS FOR BOTH THE PCS AND POSL, WE FORESEE GOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS BEGINNING FIRST BETWEEN THE POSL AND THE PD. THE SOCIALISTS AND DEMOCRATS ARE THE

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MAJOR WINNERS IN THE ELECTION. THEY BOTH FAVOR RELEGATING THE PCS INTO THE OPPOSITION FOR A CHANGE, AND A POSL/PD COALITION COULD PROBABLY COUNT ON PARLIAMENTARY TOLERANCE, AND OCCASIONAL SUPPORT, FROM BOTH THE PCL AND PSD. FURTHER, THE PD FACTION HOSTILE TO THE SOCIALISTS FARED POORLY IN THE ELECTION, WHILE THE POSL FACTION HOSTILE TO THE PCS DID WELL. ALSO, THORN IS AN OLD POLITICAL AND PERSONAL FRIEND OF FRG PRESIDENT SCHEEL, WHO CAN BE

EXPECTED TO ADVISE THE PD PRESIDENT THAT A SOCIALIST
DEMOCRATIC COALITION IS A BETTER ALTERNATIVE FOR LUXEMBOURG.

TWO MAJOR ISSUES WILL DOMINATE NEGOTIATIONS
BETWEEN THE POSL AND PD. FIRST: THE TEXT OF A JOINT
GOVERNMENTAL PROGRAM WHERE SOME DIFFERENCES OF VIEW MAY
ARISE BETWEEN THE PD DEFENSE OF FREE ENTERPRISE AND
FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND THE POSL PREFERENCE FOR INCREASING
STATE CONTROL OF THE ECONOMY. NO IMPORTANT DISAGREEMENTS
BETWEEN THE PARTIES ON SOCIAL OR FOREIGN POLICIES ARE
EXPECTED. SECOND: THE CHOICE OF PRIME MINISTER. THE PD
LEADERSHIP, AND MANY POSL CHIEFS AS WELL, HAVE BEEN
UNHAPPY WITH THE LACKLUSTER PERFORMANCE OF SOCIALIST PARTY
PRESIDENT ANTOINE WEHENKEL. HOWEVER, WEHENKEL LOST HIS
PARLIAMENTARY SEAT ON MAY 26, WHICH MAY MAKE IT POSSIBLE
FOR THE SOCIALISTS TO RAPIDLY ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT,
AND COULD ALLOW PD PRESIDENT THORN TO MAKE A SERIOUS BID
FOR THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP, ESPECIALLY SINCE HE MAY BE
NAMED "FOMATEUR" BY THE GRAND DUKE. SINCE IT WOULD BE
POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO HOLD BOTH THE PRIME
MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER PORTFOLIOS, A DIFFICULT
CHOICE IS IN THE OFFING FOR THORN WHO IS KNOWN TO GREATLY
ENJOY HIS ROLE AS DEAN (IN TERMS OF SERVICE) OF THE
EC FOREIGN MINISTERS.

GIVEN THE SUCCESS OF THORN, AND OF PD ECONOMICS
MINISTER MARCEL MART, WHO HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN ATTRACTING
CONSIDERABLE AMERICAN INVESTMENT TO LUXEMBOURG, WE DO NOT
BELIEVE THAT A POSL/PD GOVERNMENT WOULD MODIFY SIGNIFICANTLY
THE STATUS OF US FIRMS IN LUXEMBOURG OR GOL POLICIES OF
INTEREST TO THE US. SIMILARLY, THE POSL LEADERS, WHO WOULD
PROBABLY OCCUPY KEY GOVERNMENTAL POSITIONS, ARE MODERATES
GENERALLY WELL DISPOSED TOWARDS THE US, SEVERAL OF WHOM
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SERVED IN THE 1964-1968 PCS/POSL COALITION GOVERNMENT.
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